

The Vatican

Relations of the Vatican with Islamic Countries

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reliable European diplomatic source with East European contacts.

1. After World War I, the Vatican became convinced that the colonial systems were doomed to disappear sooner or later, and that the rise of national feeling among the colored races would make it impossible for the old world to survive. Therefore, the Vatican tried to get into direct touch with the native populations without the intermediary of the European colonial powers, whenever possible. This meant the education of a native clergy, the nomination of native bishops, and similar long range measures.
2. In Islamic countries, where native Catholic minorities did exist, but where conversions from Islam were and are practically nil, the Vatican tried to establish good relations with the Mohammedan Governments, and at the same time tried to raise the status of the native clergy by endowing it with visible pomp and dignity. Thus, in Beirut (Lebanon) there are two Cardinals: one for the Syrian Catholics and one for the Armenians.
3. Other aims of Vatican policy were the protection of the native Catholic minorities -- which was not always easy -- and the protection of the sanctuaries in Jerusalem and Palestine. On this point the Jewish-Arab conflict established a certain degree of common interest with the Arab powers. The Vatican works for the internationalization of the sanctuaries, especially of Jerusalem, but prefers an Islamic occupation to the Jewish one.
4. The visit of Spain's Foreign Minister to the Arab Governments is a development which comes three decades later than the beginning of the Vatican's policy of rapprochement, and is something with which the Vatican could hardly have anything to do. First of all, the Vatican is well aware of the rivalries among the Spanish, French and Italian Governments in the Islamic area, and has no desire to become mixed up in them. Second, it is a mistake to imagine the Vatican and Franco going hand in hand. The Vatican, in general, does not like

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the idea of any dictatorship as an institution; further, although Franco's services in crushing Communism in Spain are appreciated, the Vatican is doubtful of the durability of his regime and is afraid of being involved in his eventual downfall. On the other hand, the Spaniards have little comprehension of the subtle methods used by the Vatican.

5. In this type of diplomacy, the power nearest the Vatican is Italy. The Italian Government, having lost its colonies, is now bound to apply subtle diplomatic methods which the Vatican finds to its liking. The Italians further have the advantage that, no longer possessing military power, they do not inspire the aversion which the occupying powers still have to endure on the part of the native peoples. However, to forestall a too great Italian political influence in the Near East, the Congregation of the Oriental Catholic Churches continues to be headed by a Frenchman, the Cardinal Tisserant.

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